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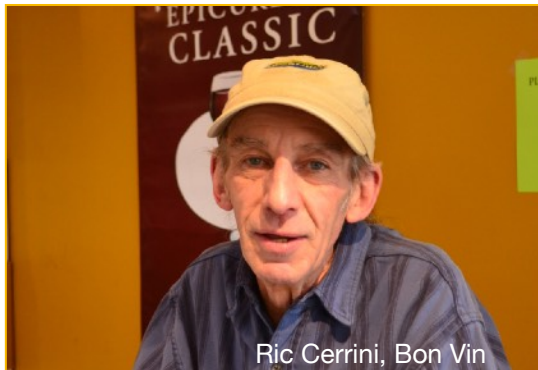
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MESSAGE

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FROM THE EDITOR

Spring is a time of rebirth. Early blooms such as crocuses, daffodils and grape hyacinths slowly but surely emerge from the retreating glacier that is winter, adding color and a sense of promise to the landscape. The Michigan wine industry will not emerge unscathed from COVID-19, but the signs are there — things will start blooming again soon.

In this issue, we feature some of our favorite little wine shops — **Madeleine Vedel** explains how good wine shops balance the palate and education of the manager with her or his ability to listen to the customer. Also in this issue, **Florencia Gomez** takes a look at some of the women who are making a difference in the Michigan wine industry. It goes without saying that 2020 sucked big time, but not for Michigan vineyards. **Cortney Casey** interviewed several winemakers to get their take on this stellar vintage.

It has been said that springtime for a viticulturist is like fighting a war. **Allison Bettin** shows us how some Michigan vineyard managers are preparing for battle. **Jessica Zimmer** gives us an ice wine update. It tastes so good, but the ultimate dessert wine comes at a price. As usual, our very own Sommelier **Ellen Landis, CS, CSW** shares her tasting notes on Michigan wines. Chicago area chef **Kevin Harmon** incorporates Pinot Grigio into four different recipes for our enjoyment. And, last but certainly not least, **Patrick Dunn** takes a look at the advantages of joining a wine club. Note: there is one potential downside to wine clubs — buying more wine than you can afford!

Cheers,



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Brenda Puska

BEST LITTLE WINE SHOPS

Surprisingly good wine shops in unexpected places

BY MADELEINE VEDEL

*I*f you want to get enthusiastic reactions from your friends, ask them about their favorite little wine shop. The answers will come flooding in. Wine is sold in many arenas: your neighborhood grocer, large liquor outlets, the corner store, the fancy foods emporium. But what sets apart the go-to wine shops are the people behind them.

Many of those who labor to select and share this most delightful of beverages were not trained in the field before taking up the task, though their pre-job experience gave them a nudge, be it from the restaurant world or as an enthusiastic wine taster and purchaser. Learning on the job is oft-repeated, with as many interpretations of this phrase as exist:

"My first year on the job I bought exclusively from our shop and never repeated a bottle," said **Brenda Puska**, beer buyer and assistant manager at Colasanti's Market in Highland, Mich. The current manager is Rob Knue, who developed the wine section there. "My husband and I drank 168 bottles that year — I collect corks and counted them all at the end of the year. The next year I did the same, only repeating a couple of the stupendous ones. The third year was the wild card year." So when her customers ask her about any bottle on her shelves, she can offer personally acquired tasting notes. And yes, she keeps a wine journal to record

all of these sensory experiences. And did she keep the screw caps as well?

Think self-motivation and downtime research: “*Windows on the World Complete Wine Course* by the noted sommelier Kevin Zraly (of the restaurant formerly atop the Trade Center Towers in New York) taught me so much,” says **Carroll Robotham**, who inherited management of the wine selection at the Honor Family Market in Benzie County. Owned by the Schneider family since 1980. Carroll was recruited from the grocery shelves just four short years ago. “That book put things into perspective for me, what was grouped and where.” Carroll humbly admits that he used to be a White Zinfandel drinker in his youth. Now he enthuses over the multitude of possibilities of the Pinot Noir grape, showcasing at least one from every country on his shelves.

Becky Hemmings at Hansen’s Market in Suttons Bay (Leelanau County) is not alone in giving credit to the dozen or more wine representatives who visit the shop and hold tastings with her, sharing their selections and their knowledge. In the twenty years she has managed and built up the wine department at Hansen’s. Her original selection of 300 labels has grown to over 1,200 and what had begun with a few shelves now dominates the center rear of the store. Encouraged by the enthusiasm and support she received, Hemmings pursued and achieved the rank of sommelier eight years into her tenure.

Good wine shops balance the palate and education of the manager with her or his ability to listen to the customer. “I’ve tried to listen to the customers, that’s 90%. What they want and what they’re looking for. With this COVID going on it’s been a hard issue to get some of the wines. It’s been a struggle. But I do my best,” says Robotham in Honor. And that includes stocking a wide range of bubbly for New Year’s day Mimosas.

“Customer service is everything,” affirms Puska of Colasanti’s, “I want to make sure the client is comfortable. I tell them that wine is not something snobby. Drink what you like. I have bottles from \$6 to \$400. Tell me what you’re willing to spend and I’ll find you something delicious. I want to establish trust. Then, once there’s confidence, I can suggest something more unusual.” And during this exceptional time, “Some people I see nearly daily. I’m helping them have a better day,” she says laughing, “This is a judge-free zone.”

Many of the state’s wine stores and wine departments have been around for 20 to 50 years. They tend to be found inside family run groceries, where local produce and condiments, a wide cheese selection and perhaps a skilled butcher reside close by. The wine section manager grows with the store, learning and exploring with the customers. “Many is the day I overhear a customer exclaim, ‘look at this bottle! I can’t believe it’s here in Highland!’” Brenda says, “We have over 10,000 bottles, over 67 Pinot Noirs from all over the world. We’re always looking for what no one else has.” She continues, “We have wines from Italy, France, Germany, Austria, Spain, but also Greece, Lebanon, Hungary, Austria, Romania.” Urging me to visit, “It’s a treat to poke around the shop. And the expressions on people’s faces, I had no idea you had this.”

But there is still room for newbies. Just two years ago **Perry Sinacola**, owner and chef of the beloved Milford House Bar & Grill in Milford, near Union Lake, decided to expand



Becky Hemmings

by opening a wine bar and shop next door (opened summer 2019). There, the sommelier consultant **Art Lokar** tells me, the goal is to offer “something cool, rare to the area, coupling a shop with a wine bar. We’re looking for wines that are exclusive, hard to find, unique and esoteric.” Offering educational wine tastings and creative pairings (prior to and during COVID), their wine club quickly soared to 160 loyal followers.

Wine encourages gatherings to taste, share and discuss, something that is sorely missed by both the wine merchants and the wine buyers. “Burritt’s (of Traverse City) wine tastings were so much fun and a great place to learn. I would never miss one,” Sharon Perkinson Flesher shares, as we reminisce about pre-Covid times. Across the state it has been tough for restaurants and bars: state - mandated closings, shifting to take-out. Urban centers have lost their allure as those who can, move to smaller locales. However, in the midst of these upsets, wine shops are doing record sales. They are filling the vacuum left by the shuttered venues.

Carroll and Becky, wine buyers in small lake-side villages known for a fluctuating tourism market had been accustomed to dramatic decreases in sales once the summer folk have gone. However, in the altered landscape of COVID, many families have chosen to stay in what had been their summer homes for the year. They bring their urban tastes to the small town, along with their dollars.

Throughout the state there are gems to be discovered by the curious and intrepid. Individuals offering passion and ever evolving expertise to their little corner of paradise. Friendships have deepened, life rhythms adapted. Wine, and those who share it, has lived up to its Shakespearean reputation: “Good company, good wine, good welcome, can make good people.”

Here is an incomplete list of a few surprisingly good wine shops in unexpected places, in no special order:

Hansen’s Foods, Suttons Bay	Toski Sands, Harbor Springs	Manistee Beverage Company, Manistee
Anderson’s Market, Glen Arbor	IGA Market, Harbor Springs	Dusty’s Cellar, Okemos
The Honor Country Market, Honor	Burrit’s, Traverse City	Clem’s Market, Muskegon
East Shore Market, Beulah	The Blue Goat, Traverse City	Canopy Bottle & Gourmet Shop, Brighton
Colasanti’s Market, Highland	The Smokehouse, Bellaire	Martha’s Vineyard, Grand Rapids
The Milford House Bar & Grill, Milford	The Village Market, Elk Rapids	Art of the Table, Grand Rapids
Everyday Wines, Marquette	Bon Vin, Traverse City	



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Madeleine Vedel was introduced to the world of wine by her parents, who had a small, but prized wine cellar. While married to a French chef in Provence, she ran food and wine tours for nearly 20 years. She is currently based in Mancelona, honing her cheese, chocolate and pastry skills and happily consuming both local and international wines within her budget.



WOMEN + WINE

THESE WOMEN ARE LEADING THE MICHIGAN WINE
INDUSTRY FORWARD

by Florencia Gomez



Nicole Triplett

*H*istorically, Barbe-Nicole Clicquot Ponsardin, aka Veuve Clicquot, was in 1805 the first woman to run a Champagne house. Since then, women have slowly claimed their space within the wine industry, from Corrinne Mentzelopoulos at Château Margaux to Lalou Bize-Leroy, whose Richebourg sells for over £2,000 per bottle. These women have led the way for female winemakers in the New World, such as the “Evita of Wine,” Susana Balbo of Argentina, María Luz Marín from Chile, and the over 300 women that are part of Women Winemakers of California.

However, most winemaking regions are still male-dominated; men own the wineries, work the vineyards, preside over the cellars, and sell the wine. But there are a few exceptions. Who are the women making their mark in the Michigan wine industry?

In 1980, near Leland at Good Harbor Vineyards, Debbie Simpson was the first woman to play an active role in a winery’s day-to-day operations. However, Michigan’s first female-owned winery, Chateau de Leelanau, wasn’t opened until 2000. Due to the hardworking female leaders in Michigan’s wineries, there is a welcoming space for the next generation: women such as Taylor Simpson (Good Harbor, Aurora), Liz Berger (of Chateau Chantal), Lucie Matthies (of Chateau Fontaine), Nancie Oxley, (St. Julian Winery) and Kasey Wierzbica (of Shady Lane Cellars). Let’s look at a few women in leading winemaker positions and the patterns underlying their careers that promise to “level the playing field” for female Michigan winemakers in the coming years.

“Most winemaking regions are still male-dominated; men own the wineries, work the vineyards, preside over the cellars, and sell the wine..”

After visiting wineries throughout viniculture areas in the region, an interest in the wine industry sparked, and a journey to becoming a winemaker began. Realizing that the industry is traditional in ways of gender and custom, **Nicole Triplett** saw an opportunity to create new traditions and build upon the foundation of the women before her. She created Black Wall Street Kalamazoo, a widely influential non-profit committed to supporting the launch, growth, and success of African Americans in business.

In 2019, The Roche' Collection was born, producing premium luxury wine grown in Michigan. The brand pays homage to old-style wine while making room for fun and fruit-forward blends, shaking up the industry. Nicole truly embraces diversity by making varied varietals into friendly, approachable wines. Nicole's top-selling wine happens to be one of the first produced, Peach Mango. “Though untraditional, these wines have been a hit, and I am proud to be the maker.”

Amy Birk was born in St. Joseph, Michigan, and has lived in Berrien County for the majority of her life. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wis., and is a graduate of the Lake Michigan College Wine & Viticulture Trades Program in Benton Harbor, Michigan.

After working at Domaine Berrien Cellars for five years with Wally and Katie Mauer, where she was a jack of all trades working as a cellar hand, enologist, and tasting room consultant, Amy went to work for the Wine and

Viticulture Technology program at Lake Michigan College (LMC) as an Enologist. She teaches several courses, including Wine Quality Control & Analysis and a hands-on winery cooperative course. She works closely with Lake Michigan Vintners to produce LMC wines.

Amy feels the proudest about her 2020 vintage, in particular the dry Riesling and Chardonnay. "Despite 2020 being a very challenging year for the world, this past year's grape harvest was absolutely fantastic! We were able to achieve a beautiful balance of sugar and acidity within the grapes allowing us to make balanced wines with minimal intervention," she claims.

Emily Goodell is one of the owners of Amoritas Vineyards in Lake Leelanau, Michigan. She grew up in Grosse Pointe with parents who appreciated wine and travel. While studying for her bachelor of science degree in Plant Science at Cornell University, the Finger Lake's Wine industry inspired her to combine her passion for plants and her growing interest in wine into a potential career. A few years later, she graduated from the University of California Davis, with an M.S. in Viticulture and Enology and took that knowledge back to Michigan. Together with her brother and parents, she turned an old abandoned homestead into a vineyard and winery and made a life in Leelanau County.

When it comes to picking her favorite wine she says, "It's always tough to choose a wine that I like best or that I'm the most proud of. It's like choosing between babies! But I do really love our 2019 Fascinator, our dry Muscat Ottonel. It was a grape that we took a few risks planting, as it likes a warm season, and it takes a little extra care in the vineyard, but I love how pure the expression of the fruit is in the finished wine."



Amy Birk

Nicole said: "It is hard to be taken seriously in an industry where winemakers do not look like you and are traditionally male." And adds: "I have found that in the past 15 years, the industry has begun to boom with women in wine, and I can only predict that this will continue as we are becoming more empowered now than ever. Current studies show that women are driving wine trends; the industry is being driven to pay attention to us in more ways than one now. Within the next 10 years, women in wine will continue to rise, shine, and succeed."

In Amy's words, "being a young female winemaker in the scene can feel a bit isolating as there are not many women in this profession. It can be a bit of a boy's club at times. I recommend not being afraid to put yourself out there and be willing to stand up for yourself in a professional sense. Reach out to other women in the industry and network. We can always help each other out."

After working in California, Emily points to the contrast within each state's reality. "Compared to California, where I see more and more female viticulturists and winemakers, I think Michigan wine and grape production is still more male-dominated. And that can be challenging for communication sometimes. Fortunately, in agriculture, most of the push back I've dealt with has more to do

with my being new to farming than my being a woman. I do think finding female mentors to help navigate a physical and time-consuming job can be essential as women have different challenges, whether it's less upper body strength or balancing a family. But I'm also seeing that changing – there are plenty of women in the cellar and the vineyard or feeling out internship opportunities, and some of the mentorship and fellowship programs that I've seen are expanding options to talk about and fix these problems. I hope to see the industry up here continuing to diversify, not just in hiring women but also people of color. I think that as diversity increases, the creativity that pushes innovation and art in this industry will flourish."

What would you tell young females thinking about becoming winemakers?

Nicole: "If you are thinking about getting into winemaking develop relationships with vineyards, directly engage with vintners, growers, distributors, and brokers. You will have to work harder and smarter than your counterparts, but you will be better for it,"

Emily: "If I had one piece of advice for a young woman looking at viticulture as a career, it would be to find some hands on experience early on. Spend a summer or a few weekends helping out. Viticulture is farming at its base, and while it is a rewarding occupation, it can be difficult. Give it a shot and see if it's something you want to do full time."

Amy: "I do see a positive change in the industry. The majority of my students who go through the Wine and Viticulture Technology program at LMC are women, many of whom work in production roles in vineyards and wineries across the United States. I hope this change leads to a more inclusive and accepting environment for both women and minorities in the wine industry. An industry that relies so heavily on creativity and adaptability can only benefit for a wider variety of people and experiences."



Pioneers in their own way, women have succeeded in creating a space in an industry still dominated by males. Breaking the glass ceiling requires grit and determination, but it's encouraging to see that there are strong women who are now making a real impression on the winemaking scene.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Florencia Gomez is originally from Mendoza, Argentina. She started her wine journey in 2008 at Universidad Tecnológica Nacional (UTN), where she earned a winemaking degree. After her first winemaking experience at Achaval-Ferrer in 2010, she has worked nine harvests in Napa Valley, Mendoza, Burgundy, and Croatia. She is now a Master of Wine candidate living in London.



2020 — A Good Year?

Bad for humans, better for grapes



A once-in-a-lifetime global pandemic, bitter political strife, widespread economic hardship — at times, 2020 seemed to be a year best forgotten.

But for many Michigan wineries, 2020 offered one silver lining: an excellent vintage.

“Winemakers live for vintages like 2020,” says Dave Miller, owner/winemaker at White Pine Winery in St. Joseph.

Miller — who grows Riesling, Cabernet Franc, Regent, Chambourcin and Marquette in southwest Michigan — says every variety turned out “awesome.” The region experienced a sunny, warm, dry summer, with similar conditions extending into fall, he reports.

“It was a vintage year like 2017, 2010, 2005, when there were similar conditions,” he says. “If you read about the great vintages in Europe, they occur in years with similar weather: warm, dry, with just enough rain to keep the leaves active and making sugar.

“Everyone should look forward to the wines, because they are going to be great,” he adds. “It will be something good to remember about 2020 — since I think most of us would like to forget (that) year.”

Geoff and Gail Frey, owners at Crooked Vine Vineyard and Winery in Alanson, near Petoskey, declared the 2020 season “one of the best in the last few years” in the region.

Crooked Vine saw an approximately 20 percent yield increase over 2019, little to no diseases, no pest or bird damage, and “just the right amount of sunlight and rain to allow the grapes to mature into a good balance of sugars and acids,” says Geoff Frey. “This makes turning the grapes into wine much easier. Not a lot of chemistry, just Mother Nature.”

**“Everyone should look forward to the wines,
because they are going to be great.”**

Verterra Winery on Leelanau Peninsula experienced a “mild winter, normal spring, good spring temps — so bud break was right on schedule — and no risks of frost,” says owner Paul Hamelin. “Then the summer was consistently warm; not hot, but very good, with average rainfalls. This allowed a good fruit set and a normal timing for veraison (when grapes change color) in August.”

While early September began to get “a bit iffy,” he says, the weather rallied in mid-September, allowing Verterra’s teams to harvest “good, ripe fruit” before and around Halloween. The result was a “good crop, very good and even cluster ripening, with good chemistries and almost perfect acidity.”

At Mawby, also on Leelanau Peninsula, “crop levels were slightly lower than average, but quality was high,” says part-owner Michael Laing. “Good sugar, high acidity, clean fruit.”

The season wasn’t all sunshine and rainbows for grape growers, though. Miller notes that a hard freeze on May 9 — when the temperature in his vineyards dipped to 23 degrees Fahrenheit for six hours — killed many primary buds and reduced his *vinifera* crop.

Jessica Youngblood, grower and winemaker at Youngblood Vineyards in southeastern Michigan’s Ray Township, also felt the acute pain of a late spring frost.

"2020 started with four days of unprecedented hard frost mid-May," she says. "We lost 40 out of our projected 50 tons of fruit in a matter of days."

Youngblood didn't have a Frontenac or Itasca harvest at all in 2020 due to the frost, she adds, but luckily, their Petite Pearl, which buds latest, didn't suffer any damage and yielded a full crop.

A small consolation: "The rest of the season was ideal for grape growing, hot and dry," she says. "The fruit had excellent chemistry and ripened early."

Joshua Morgan, winemaker at Petoskey Farms in Petoskey, says he and his vineyard manager anticipated a bumper crop year due to the early weather in the region, but rain at bud break and "unprecedented bird pressure" ultimately reduced their yields.



However, the fruit that remained "was able to hang longer than 2019, which helped lower our acid content," a frequent challenge in the Tip of the Mitt American Viticultural Area, he says. "2020, in my mind, was average. Yields were low, but quality was up. Had we had above-average yields, I feel it could have been a banner year for hybrids in the Tip of the Mitt."

Brian Hosmer, winemaker at Chateau Chantal and Hawthorne Vineyards, says it was a "rollercoaster" season on Old Mission Peninsula. Summer started late there — cool, with record rainfall and even hail —

before shifting to high temperatures and drought, then back to average temps and typical rainfall, he says.

"While the results for later-season varietals like Riesling, Cabernet Franc and Lemberger, were mixed, overall, the early season varieties did very well — such as Pinot Grigio, Pinot Blanc, Auxerrois, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay — with ripe fruit flavors, moderate acidity, sugars and resulting alcohols," he says.

Now, consumers just have to hold on until they can get their hands on the fruits of the winemakers' labor. How soon the 2020 vintage wines will be available to the public all depends on whether they're spending time in barrel, wineries' current stock of previous vintages, etc.

At White Pine, Miller says he typically releases whites and lower-priced reds the year following the vintage, depending on how much inventory remains from preceding years.

"The release depends on what we have in the warehouse and in the wine tasting room," he explains. "We

typically pour/sell only one vintage at a time. (In 2020), sales have been slower, so that will delay the release of the new vintages. We hope that sales pop in spring, when things are fully open again.”

The 2020 Riesling and Lady Slipper Rosé will be out in late spring, along with a new Pinot Gris — “our first vintage of that style,” he says.

Most White Pine reds will spend 12-18 months in barrel prior to release, so it will be some time before fans see the majority of Miller’s 2020 reds.

Youngblood says visitors can expect three of her 2020 wines to hit their tasting menu in spring, while the fourth will be released later in the summer.

At Mawby, release dates span the entire gamut: Some wines will be available almost immediately, while others won’t be available for years. A once-fermented Vignoles/Riesling sparkling — fittingly called Once — was slated to be bottled by early January. Other bubblyies will be *tirage* bottled and held two to three years prior to disgorgement and release, says Laing.

For Hosmer, it’s mainly a matter of chemistry — along with taste and smell.

“We make the decision for the aging primarily based on perceived ripeness parameters such as sugars, tannin, anthocyanin, and phenolic structure as it would pertain to a particular variety,” he explains. “If they don’t have the tannins to resolve and phenolics to scaffold the wine, then there isn’t much to gain from aging aside from autolysis or aroma development. The speed at which they shift those structural elements really depends on cellar temperatures and types of tannins. Due to vintage variation, we have to watch it unfold each year and respond accordingly. Generally, tasting the development and smelling where they are can be the best signposts.”

Some of the better sites and clones will be whisked away to spend time in oak, “since we were able to make most of our reserve wines, unlike in other years,” he says.

According to Morgan, all of Petoskey Farms’ 2020 reds will be going into barrel to sit for nine-18 months prior to bottling, while 90 percent of white wines will be bottled heading into summer of 2021.

“There are a few wines we have a good stock of, so it will allow me to let this year’s wine sit on its lees for a bit longer,” he adds. “We had a great summer, which really sucked down our inventory, and will force my hand into bottling sooner — which is a good problem to have.”

Cortney Casey is a certified sommelier and co-founder of [MichiganByTheBottle.com](https://michiganbythebottle.com), a website and online community that promotes the entire Michigan wine industry. She’s also co-owner of Michigan By The Bottle Tasting Room, tasting rooms operated in partnership with multiple Michigan wineries, located in Shelby Township, Royal Oak and Auburn Hills. Contact her at cort@michiganbythebottle.com.



SPRINGTIME IN

Mother Nature deals her hand in the spring

by Allison Bettin

THE VINEYARD

W

inemaking is often seen as an art form accomplished by a specialized professional in autumn after harvest. Tools include fermentation vessels, presses, yeast strands, and oak barrels, and many winemakers are formally trained in the arts of microbiology in order to perform their craft. What many don't recognize is that winemaking actually begins outside the winery in the vineyard itself.

Every year the vines undergo a complex cycle of rebirth, fruiting, and hibernation, all at the mercy of unpredictable weather events. Each season is rife with its own set of challenges, but perhaps none more so than spring. As the great winemaker and viticulturist Steve Matthiasson once wrote, "spring and early summer in the vineyards is when the wine is truly made. Springtime for a viticulturist is like fighting a war... Mother Nature deals her hand in the spring, and how the cards are played translates directly into the finished wine."

Spring is a magical time in the vineyard. After winter dormancy, warmer temperatures trigger moisture absorption through the roots and up to dormant buds. Rehydration stimulates these buds to grow new leaves, a process known as bud break, which marks the rebirth of the vine's lifecycle. It also marks the beginning of a viticulturist's mad dash to keep up with vine phenology, which is the study of a vine's life cycle as it relates to the seasons. Matthiasson says "the season thumps along at its steady rate, and we have to somehow sync the vine phenology to that drumbeat. Wine quality is dependent on keeping up with the drumbeat."

Despite the integral role a viticulturist plays in the finished product, not all wineries have one on staff. Vineyard consultants, whether in the form of individual professionals or management companies, become essential expenses for wineries without viticultural expertise. In regions with challenging climatic conditions, these services become even more essential. Which is why Michigan-based vineyard management company Agrivine Inc, owned by husband and wife team Jen and Ben Bramer, is booming with work.

Agrivine services some 40 farms in northwest Michigan's Old Mission Peninsula AVA. Jutting out into Lake Michigan, this small wine region's excessively cold winter temperatures are moderated by the surrounding lake. Agrivine's management work starts during the winter, when combating winter injury is crucial in this northern clime. Owner Jen says that canes from the base of the vine are tied down close to the soil so that snowpack can help insulate the vines from freezing temperatures, keeping buds safe from permanent damage so that they can form new growth in the spring.

Though winter management is important, spring is Agrivine's busiest time of year, says Jen. "We're very much dependent on the weather for being able to get the work done and also it sets the timeline for bud break which determines when certain tasks need to be accomplished," she says. The drumbeat of the season has been set, and the key task of the viticulturist is to remain in tune. Jen

says that after assigning crews to vineyards, her attention turns to “scouting at different farms to determine where growth stages were at and what needed to be performed next at what locations.”

Once bud break occurs (the process during which the vine’s buds begin to grow), the work really begins. Spring frosts are the enemy of buds, so Agrivine uses fans to circulate air flow in the event of a frost, though Jen says proper site and varietal selection are key in preventing unfavorable conditions. Once the buds are safe and healthy, attention turns to managing its shoots, which is the growth from the buds that will eventually produce grapes. Shoots are thinned so that usually only one shoot per bud is left - but timing is crucial. Thinned too early and the shoots will have excessive vigor (all nutrition is channeled to one shoot). But thinned too late, and the shoots will be stunted in growth. The quality and quantity of grapes are dictated by this early task.



The remaining shoots are then guided to coil around wires in a vineyard’s trellis system, a task termed *shoot-positioning*. For Agrivine, this is accomplished mostly through vertical shoot positioning (VSP), in which shoots are trained upwards in a candelabra-like shape. There are many methods other than VSP used for training shoots, but they all serve to keep shoots from overlapping each other, so that future grape clusters can have ample room for air flow and sunlight.

Shoot-thinning and positioning are crucial, because once the shoot’s flower clusters bloom and berries begin to form towards the end of spring, Mother Nature has dealt her hand. According to Matthiasson, “most vineyards have a consistent number of days from bloom to harvest, and so the timing of bloom dictates the timing of harvest. A late bloom means a late harvest, unless the weather cooperates. Fall rains, cold temps and the risk of frost are common concerns. Once the bloom date has exposed itself, we get back to managing whatever we can to keep the vines in good shape given the hand we were just dealt.”

Fortunately, bloom affords the viticulturist the ability to approximate the volume of grapes they’ll be harvesting come fall. This information is vital for estimating the amount of resources needed, and is communicated to the winemaker who can then plan for the production phase. Jen says that Agrivine’s most important relationship is in fact with the winemakers themselves. “They are the buyers of the product we work all year to grow,” says Jen. “Many have differing wishes or ideas for the end result they are trying to achieve, but all are wanting the best possible fruit to make the highest quality wine in the end. We listen to what they are looking for and then work to get as close as we can to their goal.”



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Allison Bettin is a wine columnist and industry professional, with a Level III Award in Wine and Spirits from the Wine and Spirit Education Trust (WSET). She has been a passionate student of wine for the last decade.



ICE IS NICE

by Jessica Zimmer

Michigan ice wines are a tasty treat any time of year

A typical Michigan ice wine is sweet and well-suited to pair with desserts and savory foods. It's meant to be drunk a little at a time. When choosing an ice wine, ask when the grapes were picked, the sugar level of the wine, and the bottle's alcohol by volume (ABV).

"You want an ice wine with intense flavor that's fruit-forward and does not leave a sugary film on the palate. When it's new, it should taste crisp and fresh. As it gets older, it will taste more complex," said Deb Burgdorf, winemaker and co-owner of Burgdorf's Winery in Haslett.

An ice wine should have a sugar level of between 35° and 50° Brix. The ABV should be between 8 and 14 percent, said Brian Hosmer, winemaker at Chateau Chantal Winery & Inn in Traverse City.



Cabernet Franc, Domaine Berrien

"In the past, Chateau Chantal made ice wine with 14 percent ABV. Right now we're aiming to stop fermentation when the wine hits 10 to 12 percent ABV. We want to create ice wine that's more balanced," said Hosmer.

Wally Maurer, winemaker at Domaine Berrien Cellars in Berrien Springs, said he doesn't pick fruit until temperatures are below 17° Fahrenheit and the berries are frozen solid.

"Usually we don't reach the proper 17° F cold temperatures for ice wine until around Christmas," said Maurer.

Maurer said if the grapes are picked then the wine has "those bright flavors of fresh strawberry, raspberry, and other red fruits."

"If you don't get low enough temperatures to pick the ice wine grapes until later, like February, the wine tastes more like honey. It also has more austere, dried fruit flavors, like dried strawberries," said Maurer.

A few choice offerings

Most Michigan wineries make only one or two varieties of ice wine, red or white. The red wine usually uses Cabernet Franc grapes. The white wine can be made with Riesling, Chardonnay, Gewürztraminer, Grüner Veltliner, Vidal Blanc, cold-hardy varieties such as Cayuga White and Traminette, or a combination of these.

A true ice wine is made with grapes that freeze on the vine. The grapes are pressed while frozen, "at 17 degrees minimum," said Burgdorf.

"We press them using a mechanical press with more pressure than usual," added Burgdorf.

Hosmer said frozen grapes should be hard as marbles and make a "ting ting ting" sound at first.

"Soon the noise stops as the grapes get flattened out into a big frozen block. Then the juice starts flowing out, as thick as

syrup," said Hosmer.

Hosmer said making ice wine is time-consuming, expensive, and risky.

"We net the grapes, because they attract birds. The grapes have to freeze uniformly. After we pick, it takes 12 hours to press the grapes. The temperature has to stay low enough so we can get grapes in from the second block to be pressed," said Hosmer.

Hosmer said this year, Chateau Chantal will make both red and white ice wines.

"We'll make a Cabernet Franc red ice wine. We'll also make a traditional white ice wine with a proprietary blend that includes Riesling, Chardonnay, and some cold-hardy varieties," said Hosmer.

Hosmer said the white ice wine has "incredible sweetness and fruitiness, with all the delicateness of a fine Riesling."

Chateau Chantal currently offers a 2017 Vidal Blanc ice wine with a 12.1 percent ABV that tastes of candied lemon, baked apple, and honey. It also sells a 2017 estate (white) ice wine with a 13.7 percent ABV with a nose of honey and apricots.

Maurer said Domaine Berrien Cellars made a Cabernet Franc ice wine in 2017.

"Our red ice wine has an ABV of 8.4 percent. It comes in a warm auburn color and has flavors of apricot and strawberry. These are layered with candied orange, honey, and spice," said Maurer. Domaine Berrien Cellars' 2017 Cabernet Franc won a silver medal in the Jefferson Cup Invitational Wine Competition in 2018.

Burgdorf's Winery offers a 2016 Vidal Blanc ice wine. The 2016 vintage has an ABV of 12.4 percent and is golden, with notes of peach, pear, and nectar.

"We don't expect to make it this year, but we have the 2016 vintage for sale. Ice wine can age for 20 to 30 years and remain excellent," said Burgdorf.

Burgdorf's Winery's 2013 Vidal Blanc ice wine won numerous awards, including double gold and best of class at the 2015



International Women's Wine Competition, silver at the 2015 International Eastern Wine Competition, and silver at the 2015 Fingerlakes International Wine Competition.

Prices for a powerful punch

Ice wine is typically priced upwards of \$25 a bottle. It comes in a smaller bottle, usually a 375 ml bottle that pours two glasses. Domaine Berrien Cellars' ice wine retails for \$40, Burgdorf's Winery ice wine for \$58, and Chateau Chantal's two ice wines for \$80 each.

Maurer said ice wine is a delicious alternative to dessert. It draws the attention of regular visitors from Chicago.

"It's rich and very sweet, so you only need a little bit. I pair it with high-cocoa dark chocolate, which is acidic. That provides a great contrast," said Maurer.

Burgdorf's recommends pairing its ice wine with chocolate, crème brûlée, and sharp cheese.

"I recommend serving it chilled. Give just a little taste of it to a person who has a dry palate. The grapes when picked have a sugar level of 44° Brix! That's twice the amount for grapes used for standard wine," said Burgdorf.

Visitors should prepare for changes when planning to taste ice wine during the pandemic. First, they may need to make a special request. Ice wine is not usually included in a normal wine flight. At Burgdorf's Winery, visitors are required to wear masks inside.

Customers should also bring a mask, make a reservation, and prepare to be seated outside. At Burgdorf's Winery, visitors are

required to wear masks inside.

Chateau Chantal is holding virtual wine tastings, in which experienced staff explain the background of wines to customers who have had wines shipped or delivered. Chateau Chantal is also providing outside wine tastings on its patio and in igloos. Domaine Berrien Cellars is offering the purchase of wine bottles or flights for outdoor consumption in tented seating areas.

Deb Burgdorf said she is excited to introduce ice wine to everyone who stops by, from locals to ice wine enthusiasts.

"You can find ice wine throughout Michigan. There is an idea that only Canada is known for ice wine. That's not true. More Michigan vintners are becoming known for ice wines as well," said Dave Burgdorf, co-owner of the Burgdorf's Winery.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jessica Zimmer is a news reporter, attorney, and educator based in northern California. She has worked in journalism for over 20 years. She covers a wide variety of industries, including alcoholic beverage production, transportation, law, and the arts.





Mari Vineyards | 2018 Scriptorium Riesling

Old Mission Peninsula: I am wild about the steely expression of this dynamic Riesling. Citrus blossom and wet stone on the nose precede a colorful blast of flavors. Meyer lemon, white peach, green apple, lime sorbet, oyster shell salinity, and a thread of minerality dance across the palate. It is beautifully balanced and structured, with a finish that offers impressive persistence. SRP: \$26 | Food pairing: Prosciutto and peach flatbread | www.marivineyards.com

Detroit Vineyards | 2017 Woodward & Vine 2019 CV

Lake Michigan Shore: This jazzy blend of Chardonnay and Vignoles (a complex hybrid grape) delivers a perfumed floral aroma. Tickling the taste buds are layers of white peach, crushed herbs, Granny Smith apple, fresh pineapple, and Meyer lemon. The texture is smooth as satin, and the vibrant acidity keeps it balanced all the way through. SRP: \$26 | Food pairing: Pineapple chicken fried rice | www.detroitvineyards.com

Black Star Farms | 2018 Sparkling Riesling

Leelanau Peninsula & Old Mission Peninsula: The alluring citrus blossom aroma paves the way for a zesty effervescent entry. The lively composition of Honeycrisp apples, sweet summer peaches, a whisper of minerality, Kaffir lime, and floral undertones invigorates the palate. Crisp and fresh with a pinpoint bead, and lovely note of honeysuckle on the uplifted, energetic finish. SRP: \$18 | Food pairing: Blue cheese and pear crostini | www.blackstarfarms.com

Bel Lago Vineyard, Winery & Cidery | NV Bel Lago Red

Michigan: Here is a delectable dry red wine that opens with an earthy, mixed berry aroma. The tasty composition includes Cab Franc, Merlot, Lemberger, Regent, Frontenac and Marquette. On the palate, refined tannins frame blueberry jam, mulberry, blackberry, star anise, and plum chutney. Eighteen months in French and American oak contribute vanilla and brown spice, and the flavorful finish is smooth. SRP: \$18 | Food pairing: Italian sausage Orecchiette pasta | www.bellagovineyard.com

Rove Estate Vineyard & Winery | 2018 Pinot Noir

Leelanau Peninsula: The heady scents of rose buds and cherry fruit on the nose are inviting. Juicy red cherries, dried cranberries, and notes of strawberry pie filling the palate are backed by lively acids. A whiff of spiced oak (from 18-month French oak aging) adds dimension. This light and airy Pinot Noir sails across the palate like a gentle spring breeze as it heads to the fresh, clean, satisfying finish. SRP: \$35 Food pairing: Mushroom risotto www.roveestate.com

Youngblood Vineyard | 2019 Rosé of Petite Pearl

Michigan: A glistening rosy pink hue catches the eye, and the aroma of cherry blossoms is dreamy. This fruit driven, off dry Rosé is vivid and expressive with notes of Sweetheart cherries, lemongrass, and juicy fresh pineapple interlacing with a trace of pink peppercorns and cherry cordial. Well balanced and refreshing with a pleasing level of sweetness. SRP: \$18 | Food pairing: Hawaiian grilled chicken | www.youngbloodvineyard.com

Chateau Fontaine | 2018 Pinot Blanc

Leelanau Peninsula: Citrus blossom and tree fruits greet the nose with this engaging Pinot Blanc. Layers of fresh figs, Jonathan apples, delicate herbs, chamomile, and papaya wake up the palate with an energetic vibe. Elegant and flavorful with a satin-like texture, and bright core of acidity. The wine remains refreshing and lively through the extended finish. SRP: \$18 | Food pairing: Citrus-glazed halibut | www.chateaufontaine.com

Brengman Brothers | 2018 Artist Series Barrel-Aged Chardonnay

Leelanau Peninsula: From their estate Crain Hill Vineyards comes this intensely aromatic, well-structured Chardonnay. Ripe apples on the nose lead to a rich mouthful of honeycomb, Fuji apples, buttered toast and spice (12-month French oak aging), fresh squeezed orange juice, and hints of caramel. Perfectly balanced and expressive through the long-lasting finish. SRP: \$44.95 | Food pairing: Turbot with beurre blanc sauce | www.brengmanbrothers.com

Black Star Farms | 2018 Arcturos Sauvignon Blanc

Michigan: This sensory pleasing Sauvignon Blanc delivers a gorgeous aroma of a fresh white floral bouquet. Traversing the palate are flavors of sun ripened nectarines, lime ice, fresh squeezed Oro Blanco grapefruit, and minerally notes, with accents of lemon verbena. Sleek and brilliantly balanced with a pop of lime ice on the revitalizing finish. SRP: \$19 Food pairing: Goat cheese and fig flatbread www.blackstarfarms.com

Detroit Vineyards | 2019 Woodward & Vine iBlau!

Lake Michigan Shore: This dry red wine, crafted of 100% Blaufränkisch, leads you in with a deep raspberry hue and enticing spicy aroma. Broadening on the palate are notes of brambleberries, spice-dusted cherry crumble, and a subtle touch of oak, all wrapped around a nice spine of acidity. Vivacious and elegant through the lifted finish. SRP: \$30 | Food pairing: Smoky sausage and grits | www.detroitvineyards.com

Youngblood Vineyard | 2019 Frontenac Blanc

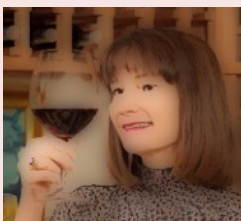
Michigan: Scents of fresh cut lemon verbena and tree fruits engage the senses as this Frontenac Blanc (Vitis hybrid) dry white wine approaches the nose. It is brimming with flavors of nectarines, crunchy green apples, exotic dragon fruit, and a pinch of crushed herbs as it traverses the palate. Crisp acidity and the clean, bright finish will have you reaching for another glass. SRP: \$20 | Food pairing: Penne pasta primavera | www.youngbloodvineyard.com

St. Julian Winery | 2019 Braganini Reserve Sauvignon Blanc

Lake Michigan Shore: The citrus blossom and crisp pear aroma at first swirl is mouthwatering. Enlivening the palate are juicy flavors of tropical fruit, fresh squeezed pomelo, mango sorbet, and gentle grassy notes add further dimension. Snappy with brisk acidity balancing the wine through the last stimulating drop. SRP: \$21.99 | Food pairing: Chicken and sugar snap pea stir fry | www.stjulian.com

Good Harbor | 2017 Late Harvest Riesling

Leelanau Peninsula: Delicate white freesia flowers on the nose set a pleasing tone for this beautifully textured wine. Multilayered and well-structured with ripe pineapple, peaches and cream, lemon-lime gelato, and blanched almonds converging in harmony on the palate. Well balanced and lip-smacking as it heads to a long-lasting finish. SRP: \$15 | Food pairing: Honeyed pear tart | www.goodharbor.com



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ellen Landis, CS, CSW, is a published wine writer, certified sommelier, wine educator and professional wine judge. She spent four years as a sommelier at the Ritz Carlton and sixteen years as Wine Director/Sommelier at the award winning boutique hotel she and her husband built and operated in Half Moon Bay, CA. They recently sold the hotel to devote more time to the world of wine. Contact Ellen at ellen@ellenonwine.com



COOKING WITH PINOT GRIGIO

BY KEVIN HARMON



I'll admit I was completely floored when my younger brother suggested an Oregon Pinot Grigio to go with a grilled shrimp and veggie salad on a warm June night at a nifty outdoor Chicago café. At that point, I didn't even know Keith was a wine drinker, let alone someone sufficiently wine-savvy to know what foods to pair with a wine like Pinot Grigio. I was skeptical, since the only time I had tasted Pinot Grigio was at an Italian restaurant and the light white didn't really go well with the pasta and

wild game dish I had ordered. It was a bit too dry and bland for me, not at all what I was used to in other whites such as Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc.

The Chicago Pinot Grigio Keith and I shared was light and rich and had flavors of apples, cinnamon and honey and I thought it would go well with my apple crumble dessert and it did.

A mutation of the red Pinot Noir grape, Pinot Grigio is called Pinot Gris in France. Although Oregon and California produce some pretty good Pinot Grigios, I've also had some tasty ones from Michigan, Wisconsin, New York and yes, even Ohio. A lot of the wine produced in the Buckeye State comes from the Cayuhoga Valley, and I've had Pinot Grigio in seafood restaurants in both Columbus and Cleveland.

TERROIR TELLS TALES

I've found the Italian Pinot Grigio has a light, crisp personality overall, with the Pinot Gris being more full-bodied. Pinot Grigio can pair with light seafood, poultry and wild game, pasta, fruits and grilled and baked veggies. It goes surprisingly well with sushi too.

I would say it's one of the easier wines to cook with, as it adds subtle flavors with a bit of a punch. I've had friends ask me about the differences between wines with "crossover" profiles, like Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Grigio. When I started cooking with these wines I did notice subtle differences. Many Pinot Grigios are not as strong, or full-bodied as a Chardonnay or Sauv Blanc.

A Pinot Grigio from France differs from an Italian or New Zealand Pinot Grigio, which makes it interesting to cook with. A friend and pastry chef in Chicago says he likes the hint of flavors that Pinot Grigio provides to pies and fruit tarts. He served me a lemon and raspberry tart with a peach and Pinot Grigio glaze that was one of the more powerfully potent desserts I'd ever had. The fact that many Pinot Grigios are not very sweet helps them marry well with many foods.



If you are looking for the perfect starter wine to begin incorporating into foods, Pinot Grigio might be it.

PINOT GRIGIO SANGRIA

One cup of orange juice
One-half cup of sugar
One bottle of Pinot Grigio
One-fourth cup of lemon juice
One orange, cut into thin slices, then cut in half
One lime, cut into thin slices, then cut in half
One lemon, cut into thin slices, then cut in half
One-half cup of lemon-lime soda

In a medium saucepan, combine orange juice and sugar, cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally,

until sugar is dissolved, then pour into a two-quart pitcher. Add remaining ingredients except the soda to orange juice mixture, stir, cover tightly and refrigerate for two hours. Prior to serving, add soda and serve over ice in tall glasses.

BAKED WHITEFISH WITH PINOT GRIGIO BLUEBERRY SAUCE

Four whitefish fillets	Two cups frozen blueberries
Two tablespoons olive oil	One and a half cups sugar
Salt and pepper to taste	One cup Pinot Grigio
One teaspoon onion powder	One-fourth cup veggie broth
One teaspoon garlic powder	One-half cup lemon juice

Coat fish with mixture made in bowl of salt and pepper, oil, onion and garlic powder, rub with fingers over the top of the fish, place a sheet of aluminum foil over baking sheet and bake for 20 minutes at 350 degrees. Place blueberries, broth, wine, sugar and lemon juice in medium saucepan and simmer for 15-20 minutes until reduced by half. Serve over fish.

SHRIMP WITH TOMATOES AND PINOT GRIGIO

Two pounds of shrimp	One-half teaspoon red pepper flakes
Two tablespoons of olive oil	One-half teaspoon oregano
One chopped yellow onion	One medium tomato, chopped
Four cloves of garlic, chopped	One cup Pinot Grigio
One-half teaspoon salt	One teaspoon parsley

Combine in skillet over medium heat: oil, onion, garlic and salt. Cook one minute, then add remaining ingredients. Stir 3-4 minutes until shrimp is cooked. Serve on toasted crusty Italian bread slices.

COOKED CHICKEN AND CITRUS SALAD

Two tablespoons olive oil	One cup Pinot Grigio
Four cooked chicken thighs, cut up	One-half grapefruit, peeled and cut into sections
Salt and pepper	One-half cup sliced red onion
One orange, peeled, cut into sections	One-half apple, sliced
One-half sliced cucumber	

Heat chicken in oil with salt and pepper for two minutes. In a large bowl, combine orange, grapefruit, tomatoes, wine, apples, onion, cucumber and a dash of oil, salt and pepper. Add chicken and serve over salad greens..

Kevin Harmon is a Chicago-based writer, who has worked as a personal fitness trainer and personal chef. He has a degree in health education and attended culinary school in Chicago.





WINE CLUBBING

Michigan wine clubs offer myriad benefits

by Patrick Dunn

*M*ichael Schafer says there's just one potential downside to joining a wine club:

"If you're not careful, you'll wind up spending more money than you expect to," laughs Schafer, a Troy-based wine and spirits educator known as [The Wine Counselor](#). "It's like going into a wine and spirits store and going, 'Wait, I came in here for one bottle. How did that case come out?' It just happens."

Schafer says wine clubs are a win-win for all involved, offering wineries a way to build closer, long-term relationships with their customers, while also offering members a variety of exclusive benefits. One of the key advantages for wine club members is exposure to new, rare, or in-demand products. Chris Lopez, retail sales manager at [Black Star Farms](#) in Suttons Bay, says he joins wine clubs "because I want to try stuff that's new and different."

"I can always order or go buy things that I know I like," Lopez says. "But this is a way to get some stuff that I might not normally try. And I've got to tell you, a lot of times I've been surprised at things I've really enjoyed that I might not have picked up on my own."

Lopez notes that Black Star offers clubs that focus on red, sweet, dry, and other wine types, so members can focus their explorations within an existing area of interest. Most other wine clubs feature a more diverse product mix, but offer special access to popular or member-exclusive products. For example, [Verterra Winery](#) in Leland offers its wine club members first dibs on its rosés.

"No joke, they have a cult following," says Colleen Peterson, tasting room manager at Verterra. "We already sold out of them this year from the 2019 vintage. So that is a big perk that I know a lot of people like."

Wine club members also usually receive special discounts, which may include a percentage off their purchase of a bottle, case, and/or glass of wine in the tasting room, depending on the club. But the perks don't end there. Club members often also have



access to exclusive events, or even a members-only area, like Black Star's [Barrel Room](#). At [Dablon Vineyards](#) in Baroda, club members are invited to regular parties where the winery releases a new members-only vintage or varietal.

"I always hear how special [members] feel," says Cassondra Rudlaff, Dablon's wine club manager. "That is something I hear routinely. They love the events. They love when they walk into the tasting room. The tasting room staff knows who they are ... and sometimes they even have their bottle ready for them, knowing what they drink on a Friday or what they drink on a Sunday."

Rudlaff says Dablon's club creates a "family attachment type of feel," not only between the members themselves but also between members and winery staff. As at Black Star, the club is free to join, and Rudlaff says Dablon's primary aim is to create community.

"It's about teaching people," she says. "It's about getting people to know our wines. We're not in the membership business to just make money off of a monthly membership fee."

And perhaps most importantly in the age of COVID-19, wine clubs have provided a safe way for wine enthusiasts to stay connected to their favorite Michigan wineries. Peterson notes that most wine clubs will deliver directly to their members' doors, even if in-person events and tastings may be out of the question for some at the moment.

"We had a lot of members who didn't want to come out [to the winery] this year, which is fine," she says. "But we did a lot of flat-rate shipping. It's just nice that it can go straight to someone's house if they're not comfortable coming out this year."

Patrick Dunn is an Ann Arbor-based freelance writer, wine enthusiast and inveterate Michigan explorer. He is the managing editor of *Concentrate*, an online magazine covering Washtenaw County and has written for publications including *The Detroit News*, *The A.V. Club* and *Paste*.



WINE Gift LIST



◀ Wine Tumbler

If you're home alone or on the beach, this 12-ounce stemless wine tumbler features double insulation stainless steel vacuum construction with copper insulation that keeps your wine perfectly cool for hours. Hand wash recommended. **Available at:** <https://tinyurl.com/yxqxsqz2> | **MSRP: \$26.**

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Personalized and available in three different gift sets, the beautiful wood wine caddy gives your table setting extra class. The glass caddy comes in sets that allow storage of two glasses, four glasses, or use as a cheese board while displaying your favorite vintage. **Available at** <https://tinyurl.com/y4x4nl6a> | **MSRP: \$35.34.**



◀ Bottle Stopper Garden

Emptying the wine bottle is just the beginning of the fun with this simple hydroponic kit. Once that wine is dispensed with, fill the bottle with water, plug the neck with one of the three hydroponic "smart soil" capsules, drop in some herb seeds, and put it in a sunny spot.

Available at <https://tinyurl.com/y3ryzkyu> | **MSRP: \$24.**



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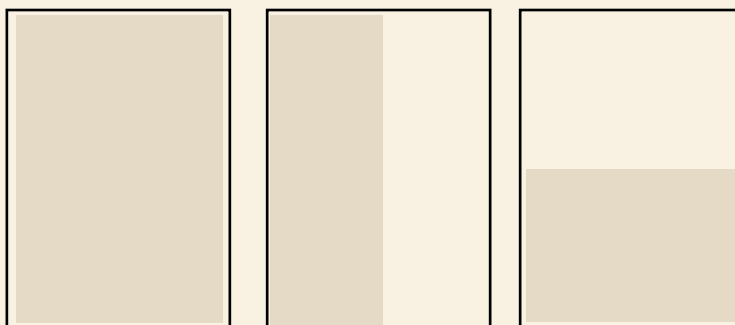


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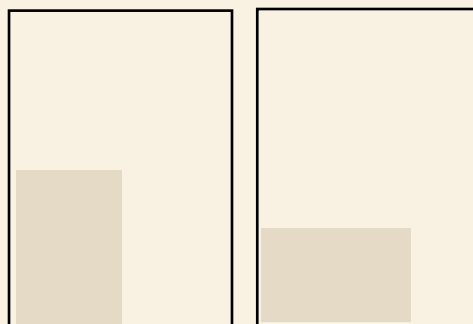
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